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EDUCATION AND WELFARE. Prof J V Denney

The honor that you have done me in inviting me to be your commencement speaker imposes upon me a great obligation, of which I am deeply sensible.

At the outset let me confess to a great faith in the youth of this land. Youth suffers at present under many unjust accusations. But to disbelieve in youth is equivalent to a prophecy of national disaster within the next twenty years. Within that period you and thousands of others like you, passing from the schools and colleges, will control the destinies of human life in America. For a time you will suffer under the restraint or prosper under the leadership of those who are just ahead of you in the procession of the generations, but sooner than you now realize you will find them dropping away and leaving in your hands the leadership in science and industry, literature and education, government and religion. I envy you the great adventure just ahead and would gladly take a place in the ranks, with you. Arriving at one of the most critical periods of human history, you are destined we trust to salvage the best that civilization has produced and to find superior modes of conducting our common American life. What light have you to lead you? What voice in the babel of voices shouting for your allegiance commands your attention? Is it discipline, and Duty, "Stern

Daughter of the Voice of God," or is it the voice of pleasure, success at any price, high adventure, conquest? Is it Milton or is it Rousseau? You may get some comfort from the mere fact that your problems usually present only half the truth. This is not the first time in the history of our country when youth has been challenged to think more deeply than its teachers, to criticize its critics, and to set up for itself a high and serious purpose. I remember with reverence an occasion similar to this in my own youth when a word was spoken that carried conviction to the most careless and that imparted courage and renewed will power to the despondent. The country was then completing after twenty years the business of clearing away the debris left in the train of a great civil war. The church was deploring the indifference of the wild youth of the land to the truths of religion. Matthew Arnold had been visiting our universities and in spite of much that was heartening had told us that the American landscape was monotonous, the American achievement in art very slight, American life without distinction, and America itself not at all interesting. The men of science were directing us to read the awful story of the Jukes family and to consider deeply the devastating power which nature possesses of reproducing and perpetuating through the ages that which is socially evil and continuously destructive to civilization. The time was, like the present, a time of great doubt and despondency among many thoughtful men and a time of extravagance and profligacy among the trivial-minded and the pleasure-seeking. In the midst of this welter of hopelessness

I heard at my own commencement the inspiring and reassuring voice of that educational statesman, James B. Angell, President of the University of Michigan, declaring that in such a time we must change the emphasis, we must assert not the reproductive power of evil but the reproductive power of goodness in this world. He challenged our doubts with his own confidence in the essential health of American life and in its capacity for constant self-renovation.

Since then, in the midst of difficulty and crisis, I have often heard that same clear voice calling across the years in support of courage and faith, of affirmative and constructive effort. "The reproductive power of goodness", - that was a watchword for the hour and it served its purpose well. To many it was an inspiration.

Watchwords.

Men have always had the habit of trying to concentrate their best thought in a word or a phrase pregnant with meaning. There was an age when nobility and noblesse oblige expressed the highest grace of life. Let us hope that its potency has not entirely gone even in these democratic times. The word loyalty had a passionate significance in the days of Henry of Navarre. Let us hope that each of us deep in his heart has a loyalty supreme. Later it was liberty that thrilled men's souls, and liberty continued to be used as a watchword long after the achievement of the thing politically had robbed the word of emotion. Today it

is not our liberty that we fear we have lost but some small liberties that hardly rise above the rank of passing fashions. Reason expressed the enthusiasm of a most tumultuous time, a time that showed very little reason in its deeds. These and many other watchwords have served their hour and though still potent on occasion have yielded supremacy as a new inspiration has come to dominate the mind or a new principle to captivate the imagination. In these latter days many highly charged words have followed one another in quick succession. What American, when Theodore Roosevelt was in his prime, ever failed to respond to the thrill of his call for the square deal and the strenuous life? And how much Americanism President Wilson crowded into those memorable phrases that voiced our idealism in the world war. The thought of a war to end war was the final consolation of many a youth, who paid the great sacrifice. Democracy is a word always on our lips. We think of equal opportunity. We ought to think also of honor for every form of excellence. What men have always sought to express in their watchwords is not merely an idea and a picture and an emotion all in one, but a principle of life. To this they bring their every perplexity, by this as with a touchstone they seek to test every idea. Thus each generation speaks its own word and pays tribute to ideals.

What is to be your supreme word? In spite of all the selfish materialism of the moment I believe that your word will connote not mere achievement but achievement with

benevolence, not mere success but success with spiritual satisfactions, not mere dogged work but work with pleasure in the process, not the mere winning of leisure but the winning of leisure for higher forms of pleasure. Your word will, I think, embody your aspiration for the common welfare.

Satisfaction grows as we think of the implication of the term. There is inspiration in it. It gains in motive power as its widening application is sensed. More and more welfare is appealed to as an ever broadening principle in our American life. It touches us because it always suggests people, human interests, personality. With the constitutional or legal principle of welfare I do not profess to deal. It is sufficient to note what extensive and increasing use is made of the principle by the courts when other principles seem not quite adequate.

We see this ideal at work in the field of science and invention. We note the sudden disappearance of the fear that man is doomed to be mastered and destroyed by the machinery that he has invented. The reproach that religion, law, and education have miserably failed to create a spiritual and moral force at all adequate to guarantee welfare in the use of tremendous physical power is rapidly being removed. You have not felt either the fear or the reproach.

Those now coming out of the colleges and universities have escaped that unsettling mental experience which their immediate predecessors suffered during and after the war. They have within themselves a wonderful recuperative force. They

have a native adjustability to a changed and changing world. To most of you the world seems not to have been radically altered. The worst fears and portents are those from which you are free. As in every former generation, youth today faces the world with level eyes and without panic or great concern. It takes the world as it finds it. It believes that it can re-make the world that it is to live in as former generations have done. It is utterly without paralyzing prepossessions of failure. That is one of the happy laws of life. With new life come accessions of fresh enthusiasm, gains for the forces of optimism, losses for the forces of pessimism, and the determination that new power shall be used for welfare instead of destruction.

Government and Welfare.

In the domain of law and government we are witnessing the widest application of the principle of welfare. The two years following the war, it is true, appeared to verify the pessimistic prediction of Adams in the Degradation of Democracy that civilization was destined to a paralysis of human endeavor, a complete inability of humanity to meet the problems of existence, a failure of human institutions to function in the face of overwhelming problems. Wells described the world-spectacle as a race between education and ruin. As an incentive to speedy action all of this fateful prophesy was intelligible. But the signs of the present are all against that view. There is no indication of universal

paralysis. On the contrary there is growth of faith and confidence in the ability of the modern world to muddle through its appalling perplexities. To Wells and others who would speed up our action, inertia and fixed habit present obstacles that seem hopelessly strong. But even ignorance and inertia and fixed habit have avoided many a colossal blunder in the past. It was Napoleon who said that it is as disastrous to be too early as to be too late.

You who face the future with determination and confidence in your strength know that in spite of the weekly menace of wars, and in spite of daily rumors of wars, there is now a stronger moral intention than ever before to outlaw and render impossible among civilized nations the recurrence of disastrous strife and to enter the paths of permanent peace and healing. You will live to see it accomplished and you will be the chief agents in its accomplishment.

The childish thought of national isolation from which we were rudely awakened by a world catastrophe can never again be of any satisfaction to us. There are no exemptions from the universal law of mutual responsibility. The welfare of one nation is the welfare of all.

In the face of so much law-breaking in this country I dare to assert the competence of the new generation to take the leadership and put down lawlessness. No young American from the colleges and universities with any red blood in him will admit that the laws cannot be enforced or made enforcible. That only gives comfort to the law-breaker.

It helps on the very evil which it professes to deplore. It adds courage to the forces that work continually and insidiously to nullify the gains that have been won in this country for decency and living. Be assured that these gains will not be surrendered.

It is no assumption of great wisdom to prophesy that the new generation will witness a much larger invasion of traditional private rights by the agencies of government. Every new invention brings new demands for regulation. It avails nothing to tell people to cease running to Washington with their troubles, to warn reformers that the country needs a rest. The complex super-organization of commerce and industry has not only necessitated legal interference on an unprecedented scale, but has also brought with it a large amount of new legislation in the interest of your individual life. This has been unavoidable. Whether we like it or not is an irrelevant consideration. We do not do what we like in this world. With the growth of sensitiveness to human values as against all other values we shall have all the laws needed for humane ends.

Like every idea that is inspiring to men the idea of welfare has in it the missionary urge. It is a generous and a magnanimous impulse, and essentially religious in the ends which it seeks. Americans have always liked to think that their chief traits are a dry humor, a shrewd common sense and a tough resistance to emotional and imaginative appeal. Never was there a

greater mistake. We are in our thinking and our aim a most religious people.

Was there ever a time when we were so compelled by what we see and hear and read to think seriously upon the religious interpretations of life? To be sure there is apparently little left externally either in conduct or in conversation to mark distinctions that were once maintained with pride as the outer evidence of a satisfactory internal condition. Disregarding all of the changes in mere instrumentalities employed by the churches themselves, and looking beneath these to religious meanings, we are impressed by two unparalleled conditions,- first the well-nigh universal discussion of religious matters even in the noonday clubs of business men and secondly the sincere effort for unity of organization among those whose chief objectives are essentially identical, however much they may differ in details. Discussions of differences in the churches have been a cause of dread and fear among many good men. They have been carried on with an earnestness passing into acrimony; but one fact is sure,- seldom before in modern times have men been so vitally interested in religious thought and in the religious life, or so frank in declaring themselves loyal to a common aspiration. I know that this new generation will support and maintain every social force that makes for tolerance in religion, for freedom of thinking, freedom of teaching, for peaceable discussion of differences, for the unity of all people of good impulses in the work that needs to be

done for mankind.

The chief agency which American youth will use to promote the higher unconscious unity of souls will be the fine Arts. No generation of young America before you has shown greater devotion to the cultivation of music, literature, architecture, painting, the drama. Every one of you will at least make of himself a competent appreciator. However he may win his daily bread, he will learn to love the finest things of life. In the presence of artistic perfection all vexations of the day, all conflicts, vanish. We merge as one soul in our admiration of perfection. We achieve there our highest welfare.

But it is in schools and education that we must find the daily fulfilment of our watchword. Each attempt to limit and narrow the purposes of the school as an institution in American life has served only to make clearer than before the broad idea of welfare on which public education must now be conceived. Universities have discovered many theories on which to justify themselves, all of them true, many of them partial.

The highest theory and the one to which universities will ultimately come in spite of their present reverence for marks, ranks, and degrees, is the ideal of education for well-being, education for its own sake, for satisfaction of the love for learning as a good in itself. The founder of Cornell University expressed the desire to establish an institution to which any man might come to learn anything. Schools of Art have cherished the study of art as its own

excuse for being. In all of our reorganizing and subdividing with narrower ends in view we must not lose sight of learning for learning's sake. Immediate practicality will be wholesomely modified and routine will disappear if education is spiritualized by a genuine enthusiasm for it. That enthusiasm appears as often among the younger students as among the older. It is the saving grace of the graduate student and the freshman alike. Nothing short of the enthusiasm for learning as a good in itself will explain the multifarious and varied forms of state education in university and public school today. As in the realm of legislation and government the emphasis has shifted and the chief question no longer is what precedent will permit, but what human well-being requires.

The creation of a new kind of institution in the land-grant college and the provision of new types of education was the first expression on a national scale of an aspiration for a system as broad as the needs of the whole community. It was logically followed by the introduction of the elective system in all larger institutions, providing many more possibilities within each institution. Fitting the student for the college has become less important as a prime consideration than fitting the college to the student. Faults and excesses in the elective system have been corrected, but there has been nothing resembling a return to older systems. There are many more types of curricula than ever before from which people may select the

one type that promises to suit their needs, tastes, and capabilities and each offers a special opportunity. Each type may need to be scrutinized, improved, and more nicely adjusted to the end sought by it, but the number will increase rather than diminish. And the expense of public education will also increase rather than diminish. In order to live up to our present knowledge of what it is best to do for the youth of Ohio we need at this very moment large additions to our educational resources in every direction.

The movement to restrict college opportunities by a closer preliminary selection arouses considerable hostility. But surely the alumni should be the last people in the world to be offended by changes that we make in the interest of improvement. We cannot conceive that the spirit of Daniel Webster is vexed because since his day Dartmouth College has elevated standards by as much as two years. One thing is sure. If the public accepts further restrictions as wise it will also provide and support other varieties of schools for those who are excluded. The practical question is whether these new types of schools shall be isolated or added to the university and the normal colleges. There is plenty of evidence to show that the public does not admit the complete validity of the examination test as traditionally practiced. The art of examination is the most backward of educational arts, the least understood, the least studied, and the most clumsily applied.

Furthermore no one will admit that these enormous state enterprises in higher education are conducted primarily for the few who are gifted with rare genius. The people would agree that those few, as fast as they are discovered should be endowed, set apart, privileged in all respects, and provided with the highest means for developing their gifts to the full. But this does not necessitate any denial of opportunity for the great majority who constitute the strength of working America. We Americans are glad to call ourselves the common people, but we do not regard ourselves or our children as uncommonly common. That there are marked differences in abilities has always been known and acted upon in schools but not until our tests are perfected and command general assent can they be properly regarded as final. To employ them for the purpose of classification is right. To employ them for the purpose of exclusion will hardly be admitted as American doctrine.

The schools and the colleges have been charged with undertaking new projects in education without good reason for it. We sometimes overlook the fact, however, that there have been vast changes in home life and the organization of business, compelling new undertakings in education. No childish desire for change has dictated these new things. Manual training and domestic science and business training appeared in American schools only after the home life and the farm life and business organization had ceased to provide their equivalent, and were so altered that they could not function educationally

as they formerly had done. Many ancillary considerations enter in,- the failure of the apprentice system, the changed status of women, the desire for a more scientific treatment of occupations that once it was assumed might be well enough learned casually and by imitation. Schools and colleges have acted in view of very obvious needs.

It is futile to accuse the home of abdicating its functions. The home, like the school itself, never does what it pleases. Institutions are moulded by economic and social forces beyond their own control. Some of them resist these forces as long as possible. Others fulfil as best they may the changing social and economic needs as these needs appear. The state universities have endeavored to meet them promptly. If the schools were by fiat suddenly restricted to teaching the three R's, they would today find themselves unable to do even that much on the old plan. If parental guidance seems to have failed morally and educationally it has failed through external economic and social compulsion. Without minimizing, in the least, individual responsibility the fact cannot be ignored that the forces at work in human society require constant readjustments by educational institutions and often compel the use of new agencies. Neither the school nor the family can do its work in isolation. Education cannot close its eyes to the conditions that reach up to the very doors of the school house and into the school-room itself. Medical inspection in cities is not the expression of an

ardent desire of the doctors to interfere with school work or with family life. It has come in many crowded places as a grim necessity, unwelcome to everybody, but indispensable if the school is to continue its legitimate work. The health and safety and well being of the school and the home cannot be secured by thick walls and barred doors. To make them safe the whole community must be made safe, - the county, the state, the nation. It becomes clearer every day to all who understand the close inter-relations of all peoples of earth that the only safety in dealing with any positive evil is world wide extermination.

Common Aims.

On the basis of welfare school, home, and church are slowly and surely coming to a common aim. If a new social enterprise seems to cut deeply into the work of one of these institutions at the expense of another we must remember that the chief consideration is not what particular agency shall perform any necessary work, but that the necessary work be performed.

We shall doubtless see in the future many new alignments. The church undertakes with success enterprises that were once considered foreign to its mission. Business houses, banks, and large industries establish their own schools in business hours. Vast increase in functions for welfare is assumed by government. We have seen the growth of new types of schools and new types of education. And in addition to these things we have seen voluntary cooperative

agencies arising by the dozens for the performance of social and industrial functions that were once left to individuals. The final control of all of these institutions and agencies resides in no one of them singly. The final control of each of them resides in the community which supplies the common membership, the human force, and the financial support for all of them. We are at war with our own members when we set one of these agencies against another.

Activities and Welfare.

It may be that the principle of welfare will help the colleges and universities to solve the problem presented by the numerous extra-curricular activities. Whoever invented the term 'activities' for the busyness that nowadays fills the hours outside of class-room and laboratory perceived the exact fitness of word to idea and image. Activities are precisely activities. No one ever accused them of being forms of laziness. Looking at the waste of time and effort involved in many of them we note that in this respect they compare favorably with cooperative organization in the world at large. There is plenty of wasted effort in Congress, in business organization, in the class room. A visitor from Mars might easily come to the conclusion that the multifarious social groups on this planet are engaged in a competition to see which may waste the largest portion of its time most busily and most pleasantly. He would certainly not give

the prize for waste to the college youth. He would observe that the athletic organization has worked out a technique that largely eliminates waste. It is completely efficient for its own purposes. A man of honesty and common sense recalling the way in which time was pleasantly wasted in college a generation ago could not fail to declare that time is wasted today in much better ways. He could not fail to note that the tendencies of most college activities today are educational. Would time be better utilized if the extra activities were abolished?

It is the best defense of an activity that things might be worse without it. But there is good warrant for supporting an activity that is in itself wholesome. Gross evils that attach themselves to it may be removed by persistent effort. Excess may be prevented by regulation. The question here as everywhere is whether character and determination are strong enough to effect a renovation, and to subordinate all to educational well-being.

Self-Education.

Some one has said that education is something that is done to you. The notion however is passive. A sluggish person put into any active social group would no doubt undergo some sort of beneficial change in the course of time without exertion of his own. But the best kind of education is not what is done to you but what you do to yourself. The most vital changes are wrought only by personal

effort. The true teacher endeavors so to inspire conscious exertion as to render himself less and less necessary. The school and the college do their best for the individual by contributing as much as they can to his emancipation from their kindly ministrations. The goal of college and university education is self-education.

That fraction of knowledge which we gain in schools will be immensely useful to us if we have organized it as we have acquired it into a clear cut system of judgment and philosophy. One general idea verified by the limited experience of the individual is worth more to him in wisdom than a thousand isolated facts bestowed upon him by others. The inference from a significant combination of facts spells enlightenment for the individual, for it means the possibility of further inferences and further generalizations. The sense of growth and well-being and the feeling of mastery arise not from individual and group initiative.

Culture and Welfare.

In the hands of a new race of leaders and teachers it may come to pass that the practical and scientific studies will be able by themselves to produce culture, or social-mindedness. That time has not yet arrived. No one is satisfied that the purely scientific mind, the cold logic-engine conceived by Huxley, is a fulfilment of personality. What all crave as ultimate ends in education is thinking warmed by feeling, fact illuminated by imagination, philosophy

that impels to wider human contacts and to a happier community life. Our history should reveal to us the feelings of men as they met their problems in church and state and community and should speak to us the human duty of contributing our small part today to human welfare as we see it. Our art should not only yield satisfaction in the fine achievement of the past but should inspire the determination to infuse into our present American life those ideals of the beautiful which the race has always cherished and which democracy needs now more than ever before. The literature of the coming generation should gain in vitality because it cannot remain the cult of the few but must reach the mind of the many. It should increase sensibility to real human values and to a better reading of life.

The chief problem of higher education is to unite the scientific and the humanistic, the religious and the artistic in a single educational impulse towards the development of the social sense for welfare. Right feeling and clear thinking should mean readiness to adjust personal knowledge, skill, and behavior to changing demands of the social organism. Call it community spirit, call it citizenship, call it religion, or call it culture, it means a union of science and faith.

Much of our education is vocational; but we do not forget that the greatest vocation is the vocation of living. Much of our modern education is scientific but we do not forget that the greatest science is the science of making

a satisfying life. We Americans will never permit the branches which hang low on the tree of knowledge to grow so thick that they shut out the sunlight. We believe that no matter with what practical or impractical branch our children start to climb, they will find only in the higher regions a clearer air, a brighter light, a more extended vision.

When all of the modern machinery of life has been brought to perfection; when we all have the equivalent of wings to carry us instantaneously to our destinations; when the earth is so intensively fertilized that a small corner in your garden will supply you with all necessary food, and nine-tenths of the world may be devoted to flowers; when everybody shall have every one of his rights, and every corporation a soul; when goodness shall come by inoculation and education by contagion or in stubborn cases by trepanning, shall we then at last be ready to live with satisfaction to ourselves and as blessings to our neighbors? Not unless our schools and colleges and universities shall have kept alive in the hearts of men and women the love of generous living itself, the things of the mind and of the soul, the joy of music and poetry, the aspiration of hope and faith and religion.

We are far from that now. We still take our satisfaction in controlling power so far as we can to make a very imperfect world a little better than it now is.

The glory of our higher institutions of learning is that they accept the challenge of imperfection and are active and earnest in the effort to promote welfare. The establishment of this university was a great act of faith reaching far into the future and all of the character and scholarship that you of the new generation possess was then pledged, promised, and dedicated to the welfare of your fellow-men.